

JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION

The gospel of John is very different from the other gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke, known as the synoptics because they share much of the same material, are similar to each other in many ways. The gospel of John differs from them in content, style and theology. John's gospel appears to be more of a theological reflection on the meaning and significance of Christ and his ministry, than it is a straight biography. It is very carefully crafted and employs a unique style and vocabulary.

John was a disciple of Jesus and wrote his gospel toward the end of his life, probably with the help of some of his own students. It is known as the "I am" gospel because while Jesus is reticent to identify himself as the messiah in the other gospels (particularly in the gospel of Mark), in the gospel of John He uses the unusual phrase "I, I am" repeatedly. It is a phrase heavy with divine connotations. Jesus uses it to identify himself in the following ways: "I, I am the Way, the truth, the life, the good shepherd, the vine, the bread of life" etc.

Many of the stories, miracles and teachings that appear in this gospel are unique to John. It is only in this gospel that we hear about the wedding of Cana in Galilee, the story of the vine, the farewell discourse, and the story of the woman at the well. Further, John loves to lift up a truth, look at it from various angles and then drop it for a while, only to return to look at it later in the book.

In this study we will be looking to learn about Jesus, to see what we can glean about our savior from the unique perspective that John provides. We will therefore be looking at stories and teachings that are only found in this gospel and which provide a unique insight into the life and significance of the Son. It is our hope and prayer that this study will not simply be an intellectual exercise, but will actually draw you closer in your walk with Christ. May it be a blessing which draws you deeper into the living presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

LESSON ONE

JOHN 1:1-18

THE WORD

INTRODUCTION

The gospel of John begins with power and beauty. Mark begins with the work of John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke begin with stories of Jesus' birth. The gospel of John takes us back to the dawn of creation and challenges us to consider the full ramifications of Jesus' divinity and humanity. The opening sentence, "In the beginning..." takes us back to the book of Genesis and requires us to examine that story again in order that we might recognize the role played by Christ in the creation of the world. God spoke a word and through that word, everything came into being. Now that word has become flesh. How can our minds surround such a great and profound truth? The rest of the gospel of John will help us to comprehend and apply what the incarnation means to us.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

1) In verse one, how is Jesus described? How do we know that this is Jesus?

2) In verses 1-5, is Jesus described as God?

3) Besides "the Word", what other terms are used to describe Jesus?

4) Who came as a witness to the light?

5) How did the world receive Jesus?

6) Who has seen the Father and makes Him known to the world?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Why do you think that John uses “the Word” to describe Jesus? How does that help?

2) What does it mean for Jesus to be both light and life?

3) What is John's role in the coming of Christ?

4) What do you learn about the incarnation from this passage?

5) What is Jesus' relationship to God and the Father?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

1) When you think of Jesus, do you tend to focus on his humanity or His divinity? Why?

2) How does this passage challenge you to reevaluate your perspective on Christ?

3) Do you see your role as a Christian reflected in the role of John the Baptist?

4) Do you see Jesus as your life and light? How does that play out in your life?

5) Coming to know and recognize Jesus enables us to truly know God. Has that been your experience?

6) Verse 16 says that “we have all received one blessing after another.” Has that been your experience? What blessings have you received? Are you still receiving them?

PRAYER

Father in heaven, I worship and praise Your holy name for Your wonderful plan of salvation. Thank You for sending Jesus, the Word, Who was with the Father before the world began. He came to earth willingly, in human flesh, so that a sinner such as I may be redeemed.

How I praise You heavenly Father for the life of the Lord Jesus, Who is my life and my light. Thank You for rescuing me from the kingdom of darkness and bringing me into Your glorious kingdom of light and giving me my new-life in Christ. May I live each day in a way that is pleasing to You, placing my self-life on the cross and living in spirit and truth to Your praise and glory, in Jesus name I pray, AMEN.

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/John/1>

LESSON TWO

THE LAMB OF GOD

JOHN 1:19-42

INTRODUCTION

During the times of the plagues in Egypt, a Passover lamb was sacrificed by the Hebrew people so that the angel of death would pass over them. That sacrifice of an innocent and unblemished lamb was remembered every year by the Jewish people when they celebrated the Passover feast. The gospel of John directly identified the sacrifice of Jesus with that of the lamb. Jesus too was innocent and without sin. He too died so that others could be saved. His blood established a covenant and freed His followers from slavery and death.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

1) Who did John the Baptist say he was? Who did he say he was not?

2) What did John say about his baptism and the baptism which was to come?

3) In the gospel of John, does it actually describe the baptism of Jesus?

4) What descended upon Jesus and what did it mean?

5) When John told two of his disciples that Jesus was the Lamb of God, what did they do?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Familiarize yourself with the story of the Passover. In what ways is Jesus like the Passover lamb? How is He different?

2) Where else in the gospel of John is the connection made between Jesus and the Passover lamb?

3) How would you describe John's role in relationship to Jesus?

4) What is the difference between baptizing with water and baptizing with the Spirit? Which is it when we do baptisms in our church?

5) Did John want and expect his disciples to desert him and to go and follow Jesus?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

1) Do you regularly think of Jesus as your Passover lamb? Why or why not? Does thinking of Jesus in that way add anything to the picture of Jesus which you carry with you?

2) The image of a Passover lamb emphasizes the sacrificial role of Jesus. Is that the part of His life which you would normally emphasize? What part of Jesus ministry do you normally emphasize?

3) What was the purpose of John's baptizing? How is that relevant to your life today?

4) John seemed to deliberately send his disciples away to become disciples of Jesus. What does that tell you about your role in leading others to Christ?

5) What do you think of Jesus' words to the two who would become His disciples? Do you think that both of them became believers?

PRAYER

Jesus, Lamb of God,
when you walked this earth
you did not consider
heavenly equality,
though that was yours to choose,
but took the role of servant,
and in humility
and obedience
allowed the rough nails of our sin
to be hammered into your flesh
for the sake of our salvation.
And so it is
that we acknowledge you
as Lord of all,
to the glory of God the Father,
Son and Spirit, Three.

Read more at: http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Lent.htm#ixzz2Kii6OZ8M

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4) What does the good shepherd say about sheep, the shepherd and “knowing”?

5) What does the good shepherd do of his own initiative?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Why does Jesus distinguish between the genuine shepherd and thieves and robbers?

2) What does it mean for Jesus to be called “the door”?

3) What does it mean for Jesus to be called “the good shepherd”?

4) Why is there so much emphasis placed on the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep?

5) Why is it important that the shepherd lay down his life of his own initiative?

PART THREE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

1) When you think of Jesus as the good shepherd, how does that make you feel?

2) Do you feel that Jesus knows you by name? Do you think that you have come to recognize his voice?

3) Do you think that Jesus is the door through which you have access to the Father?

4) Is it important to you that Jesus gave his life for you of his own volition? Why?

5) What do you make of all the talk of bad shepherds? Do you feel you have had bad shepherds in your life?

PRAYER

Be our shepherd, O Lord, and bless us with all good things
that we may be refreshed
with your overflowing cup
and dwell in your house forever;
O God, Shepherd of all your people,
deliver us from all troubles,
worries and cares that assail us,
that we may always do
what is pleasing in your sight,
and remain safe
in the care of our Good Shepherd; Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Source: Ludolph of Saxony, d. 1378 and Paul C. Straman, based on [a prayer from the Roman Breviary](#).

4) Is it better for us that Jesus goes?

5) What will the Holy Spirit do for us?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1) Why will we not be left as orphans? How could we have been orphans in the first place?

2) Why is obedience to Christ critical to abiding in Christ?

3) What kind of union do believers have with the Son and the Father?

4) How is it better for us that Jesus should depart?

5) How will the Holy Spirit teach the church in the future?

PART THREE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

1) What does the presence of the Holy Spirit mean to you in your walk with God?

2) How do you personally think of the Holy Spirit? As a Comforter, a Presence, an Advocate or something else?

3) Do you feel that obedience to God brings you closer to Jesus? Why or why not?

4) What has the Holy Spirit taught you about Jesus?

5) What do you make of the statement that the Holy Spirit “will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears” (John 16:13)?

PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord,
by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

LESSON FIVE

I AM THE VINE

JOHN 15:1-11

INTRODUCTION

The vineyard was an ancient symbol for Israel, surprisingly, it was always a negative symbol in the Old Testament (Isaiah 5:1-2, Jeremiah 2:21). God had planted a new vineyard, but it had grown wild, failing to produce the fruit of repentance and the fruit of the kingdom. In the New Testament, Jesus indicated a new beginning when He said, "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15:5). With these words, Jesus indicated that if we are in Him we can have eternal life and the fruit of the Spirit.

PART ONE: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1) In the illustration of the vine, who are we, who is Jesus and who is the Father?

2) What happens if we abide in Jesus?

3) What happens if we don't abide in Jesus?

4) How is the Father glorified by us?

5) If we abide in Jesus, what will we receive from Him?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) What does it mean to abide in Jesus?

2) What does it mean to bear much fruit?

3) Why is abiding in Jesus linked with obedience?

4) What do you think is involved in God's pruning of the branches?

5) Does this passage indicate that one might be able to lose salvation or fall away from the faith?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

1) Do you like the image of the vine? What about this image speaks to you? What about this image does not appeal?

2) Do you think that you are bearing fruit? What does that fruit look like?

3) What does God need to prune from your life?

4) Do you ever worry about being cut off and thrown away?

5) If we abide in Christ, what does that say about our connection with others? Do you feel that connection with others?

PRAYER Reflection on John 15:1-8

Lord of the
one true
Vine,
in you we
live and move
and have our being.
We are your branches,
spindly and slight and fragile.
Please ask your Father to prune us
(though gently).
We want to bear more of your fruit.

~ written by Anne Osdieck, and posted on The Sunday Website of Saint Louis University. <http://liturgy.slu.edu/index.html>

LESSON SIX

JESUS THE KING

JOHN 18:33-40, JOHN 19:16-22

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. The charge against Him was that of treason, for His people had accused Him of trying to start a revolution. "Are you the King of the Jews?" He was asked.

That is the question before us too. Is Jesus the king? Is He our king; the king of our hearts and lives? Is He the ruler of our world? What does it mean for us to work to live in the kingdom of God?

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

1) What was the accusation when Jesus was brought before Pilate?

2) Did Jesus claim to be a political rival of the emperor's?

3) Who did the crowd ask to be released for the Passover?

4) In what languages was the inscription on Jesus' cross written?

5) Was Pilate asked to change the inscription? Did he do so?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Did the Jewish leaders really believe that Jesus was trying to make Himself king? Why did they want Him to be arrested?

2) Did Jesus declare Himself to be king? What kind of a king did He declare Himself to be?

3) "What is truth?" What did Pilate mean by that question?

4) Why did the Jews want the inscription over the cross to be changed? Why did Pilate refuse?

5) What is the significance of the crown of thorns?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

1) We believe that Jesus is to be our Lord (king) and savior. To what degree do you think that Jesus rules over your life?

2) Do you feel that there are absolute truths? To what degree, if any, can truth be said to be relative?

3) As we look at the story we see that the major actors in the crucifixion are: Jesus, Pilate and the Jewish leaders. Who do you feel most sorry for in the story? Why?

4) How comfortable are you with claiming Christ as your king?

5) Do you think of Jesus' kingdom as existing primarily here and now or primarily as something to be experienced some time in the future? Why?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, there's really nothing that affects my life more than how I think about you.

The more I see you everywhere in the Scriptures, the more I understand why you alone are worthy of our adoration, affection, and allegiance. I expect to say the same thing ten thousand years from now.

Today I marvel at and find great peace in the joy of your kingship! It's thrilling to see the relationship between your joy and your hatred of wickedness and love of righteousness. Truly, you are the King of kings and Lord of lords. Your reign has begun and one Day will be fully consummated! Hallelujah, many times over!

You take great delight in crushing evil, just as you rejoice in making all things new. Indeed, your kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 14:7](#)). The Father has placed the government of the entire cosmos on your shoulders, and your reign of grace and peace is expanding all the time. You are the joyful King of the Ages.

Today I also remember your request for the Father to fill your church with this very same joy—the fullness of your joy—the joy you have eternally enjoyed within the Godhead ([John 17:13](#)).

May an increase of our joy propel us into expanded servanthood. May it be the fire we need for doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God. May the oil of your joy encourage and refresh us lest we grow weary in the battle.

You crushed Satan under your feet on the cross, and he will soon be crushed under our feet at your return ([Rom. 16:20](#)). Though evil hates beauty, your mercy and might have and will triumph forever. Our labors in you are not in vain. Your throne will last forever and ever, and your reign of grace will never end. So very Amen we pray with joy and hope, in your loving and triumphant name.

A prayer from the Gospel Coalition Website

LESSON SEVEN

THE RESURRECTION

JOHN 20:1-18

INTRODUCTION

The central event for the Christian faith occurred when Jesus rose from the tomb. Jesus' death and resurrection are the pivotal events around which all history spins. The power of evil, the might of sin and death are very real, but the story of the cross is one of victory over sin and triumph over the grave. The evil forces of this world could not stop our Savior and they cannot ultimately stop His followers. We can claim the power of the cross to die to all that holds us captive and holds us back, and we can claim the abundant life that will not end in union with our risen Lord.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

1) When did Mary Magdalene go to visit the tomb?

2) When Mary Magdalene saw that the stone was rolled away from the tomb, what did she do next?

3) Who ran to the tomb? Who entered first?

4) After Peter and John left, what did Mary Magdalene do?

5) Did Mary Magdalene immediately know Jesus?

PART TWO:WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Why did Mary Magdalene go to the tomb? Why did she presume that Jesus had been taken?

2) Why do you think that Peter and John raced to the tomb and why do you think that John stopped and Peter went in first?

3) What was the significance of the cloth they found?

4) Why do you think that Mary Magdalene did not recognize Jesus?

5) Why do you think that Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me."

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

1) Mary Magdalene and the disciples were surprised to find that Jesus' body was missing. How does that speak to you?

2) It took everyone a while to understand what was happening. What does that tell you?

3) It took Mary Magdalene quite a while to recognize Jesus. How does that speak to you?

4) What about this story speaks to you?

5) What does the resurrection mean to you?

Resurrection Day Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise You, our Everlasting Father, our Great and Awesome God. We glorify You for Your Almighty Power that raised Jesus Christ from His death.

We thank You for Your great plan of salvation for us through His life, death and resurrection, paving the way for us to have new life with You. All praise to You for Your Great love for humanity.

Thank You for giving us a Lord, a Conqueror, Victor, Redeemer, Deliverer and a Friend in Jesus Christ our lord.

By [Geevetha Mary Samuel](#)

LESSON EIGHT

DO YOU LOVE ME?

JOHN 21:15-19

INTRODUCTION

After Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples were unsure of what to do next. According to the gospel of John, they went back to their old jobs; in other words they went fishing. Then Jesus appeared to them on the Sea of Galilee, told them where to find fish and ate with them. Then Jesus took Peter aside to talk with him. Their conversation is all about forgiveness and redemption. As we look at their conversation, let us see how it applies to us.

PART ONE: WHAT DID WE READ?

1) Where does this story take place?

2) Did Jesus talk with Peter in front of the other disciples?

3) What did Jesus say to Peter three times? Do the questions differ in any significant way?

4) How did Peter answer?

5) During what other important event in the gospel did Peter speak three times?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Why do you think that Jesus pulled Peter aside to talk?

2) What was the point of Jesus' questions?

3) Why would love for Jesus be equated with feeding His sheep?

4) Why did Jesus ask His question three times?

5) How do you think Peter felt about this entire exchange? Do you think he felt differently about it later?

PART THREE; HOW DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

1) Have you ever failed Jesus in a major way?

2) How did Jesus come again to you? Did He?

3) Do you think that doing mission work shows love for Christ? If it does, does it do that for you?

4) Who do you think Jesus' sheep are?

5) Would you have felt impatient with Jesus because He asked you the question three times?

Should you feel that way?

PRAYER

Lord, save us from ourselves.

We continue to do the same things over and over,
expecting different results.

Lord, save us from doing too much.

We go fishing every day,
not noticing you waiting with a meal on the beach.

Lord, save us from doing too little.

We say we love you,
and yet so often we neglect your sheep.

Lord, save us from ourselves.

Help us to hear and respond when you say, "Follow Me."

(inspired by John 21: 1-19)

~ written by Rev. Nathan Decker. Posted on the United Methodist Church's General Board of
Discipleship

website. <http://www.gbod.org/>